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Published in:
Ethical Space. The International Journal of Communication Ethics

Publication date:
2019

Document Version
Author accepted manuscript

[Link to publication in ResearchOnline](#)

Citation for published version (Harvard):
McConville, B 2019, 'Trump scoop blown off course: the struggle for autonomy in international journalism', *Ethical Space. The International Journal of Communication Ethics*, vol. 16, no. 4, 2, pp. 16-24.

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Trump scoop blown off course: The struggle for autonomy in international journalism

Ben McConville

A chance interview with Donald Trump in a toilet during the hearing into his Scottish golf resort in 2008 led me to explore the relevance of the theories of Pierre Bourdieu to an understanding of the international journalism field. Reflecting on the treatment of the copy relating to Trump (later to be elected President of the United States) and my work on the 2003 US primaries for the Scotsman Publications Ltd, this paper assesses the practice of foreign correspondents and the calculations they make between autonomy and job security. The paper also applies Bourdieu's theory of practice to the journalism field where individuals and organisations compete, whether consciously or unconsciously, to promote and maximise the forms of cultural capital they possess. The analysis uses autobiography and phenomenology to assess journalism practice from the perspective of the foreign correspondent as a participant, contextualised in the power dynamics of relations and interactions amongst journalists and editors.

Keywords: autonomy, Bourdieu, field, ideology, journalistic practice

Introduction

At 6ft 3in., Donald Trump loomed over me with a look of disbelief and slight annoyance at the disruption of his toilet break. Tired from several hours of testimony at the 2008 public inquiry into his Scottish golf resort, where he blustered and fulminated using his now familiar, yet unique syntax, I had mistakenly used a toilet at Aberdeen Exhibition and Conference Centre that had been designated exclusively for 'The Donald'. I shook his hand, announced that I was a reporter for the Associated Press and established that I could ask some questions on the record, regardless of the unusual circumstances. What followed was a good-natured discussion about his performance that morning and when I asked how he thought he was doing against the various locals and environmental charities rallied against him, including the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and Scottish Natural Heritage, he replied: 'I'm slaying them!' I was then surprised when Trump asked me how I thought he was doing, and when I explained that a British Public Inquiry heard all sides of the story he seemed fazed. Journalists in the field need to make their own luck and if you put yourself in the right place, sometimes the story comes to you. I had learned this while working for a national news agency and then the Sunday tabloids in London in the early 1990s, and now I was ready to report my scoop back to AP's London bureau. Had I been working for a British media organisation I would have expected high praise and congratulations for sourcing exclusive quotes in such a way. What followed was a rejection of the quotes from the toilet by my American colleagues which baffled me at the time, but never left me and led me to consider the nature of interactions between journalists and commissioning editors.

Trump's attacks on the media as 'fake news' and the enemy of the people are now well worn, but his denigration of journalism and journalists has been part of his emerging demagoguery since he took over his father's business in the 1970s. By 2008, his interests had expanded from property development to TV host and media star and his private life provided lurid copy for gossip columnists. Regardless of his disputed wealth, Trump was a powerful player in New York City, where AP is headquartered, and his influence was growing across the US and the world. Therefore the power relationship between me, as Scotland correspondent for AP between 2006 and 2013, the news agency and interviewee was complicated and hierarchical. I return to Trump in more detail below.

The primary focus of this paper is to compare UK and US practice as a result of which it also looks at commissioning in the British newspaper sector during my time as New York correspondent for the

Scotsman Publications (TSPL) from 2003 to 2004, and how social capital and alignment to the values of the news organisation impact on practice. This assessment of power relations in international journalism is semi-autobiographical, using the Trump story and US primaries to assess the everyday struggle of journalists to assert autonomy in their work.

An international journalism field

Rather than identify a truly international journalistic field, for the purposes of this paper I will use the Anglo-American Journalism Field, based on the historic dominance and continuing hegemonic power of the major players in the field in which UK and US foreign correspondents operate. While McQuail identifies journalism as having a 'common stock of culture, symbolism and memory that go to make up an awareness of shared collective identity' (2013: 203), foreign correspondents are not homogeneous as each is usually trained in a domestic setting and therefore each may have different attitudes and perceptions of realities. The so-called 'Big Four' international news agencies are identified by Boyd-Barrett (1980) as the Associated Press (AP), Agence France Presse (AFP), Reuters and United Press International (UPI). In terms of news culture and practice AP and Reuters are Anglo-American, yet they are global in terms of the reach of the field, i.e. in terms of audience and arena of practice and publication. There have been a number of studies looking at the broad range of the international journalism field, including Hanitzsch et al. (2011) on the culture and ideologies of 1,800 journalists from across 31 countries that drew conclusions of ideological positions around neutrality, relationships between political power and journalists, and the journalism field's orientation towards the audience or market. The study characterises the international journalism field as 'a milieu', not necessarily homogeneous, which is ultimately influenced by structures such as democratic institutions, the rule of law and economies. Hanitzsch et al. notice that non-Western journalists are less concerned about objectivity and neutrality and are more interventionist and as a result more likely to produce opinionated journalism and more flexible in ethical perspectives (ibid: 478). The large-scale studies of global journalism, such as De Beer (2009), building on Merrill (1983), assess global journalism in terms of ethics, press freedom indexes, public relations and technology, and find some shared common normative news values which most journalists would recognise. This includes alignment to the normative values of journalism practice, based on the Anglo-American news values of accuracy, truth and unbiased coverage.

Jean Chalaby describes the Anglo-American model of journalism as the 'dominant cultural hegemony' in the field (1996: 303). Much is identified by Chalaby in terms of the commonalities between UK and US journalism including fact-centred discursive practices and better newsgathering leading to more objective, neutral and complete reporting. Chalaby also notes that in the 19th century, UK and US newspapers employed multiple foreign correspondents while AP and Reuters were providing overseas services – though French foreign correspondents began to emerge later, at the start of the First World War. Schudson acknowledges that over the last two centuries US journalism borrowed from its UK counterpart and vice versa (2011: 27). While much unites both models of journalism, he argues that a great deal also separates them including relations with political parties, and the impact of this on objectivity, the separation of quality and tabloid in the UK, the absence of public service broadcasting in the US and the protection and privileges afforded to US journalists via the First Amendment. In identifying the norms of American journalism he places neutrality as a central plank of news culture where 'playing it down the middle became a cherished professional ideal in the US – and elsewhere too' (Schudson 2011: 30). Commercial pressure in the 19th and early 20th centuries, claims Schudson, building on Tuchman (1978), gave rise to greater professionalism, the ideal of neutrality and objectivity, and the pre-eminence of facts over opinion in contrast to the European and French press.

My experiences as a foreign correspondent inform the argument that as much divides as unites UK and US journalism, and that while there is a hegemonic Anglo-American international journalism field, the arena of competition may be common but the players therein interpret practice from different perspectives. They enter into a new *habitus*, defined by Bourdieu (2005a) as the cultural unconsciousness of a group, and *doxa*, which he defined as the relationship dynamics where the way of seeing things become the norm, when transitioning into the international journalism field.

The prize of autonomy

Journalism is fundamentally a collaborative process, from commissioning to writing and producing, to editing, and the final product requires teamwork and co-operation. Yet journalists in the UK and US prize autonomy and the notion, if not the myth, of the lone reporter, able to make decisions about approach, content and story selection, packaged and delivered into the grateful hands of the editor, after which it will be published, untouched. But how does this play out in different news cultures? How does commissioning differ between the UK and the US? In both UK and US news cultures a great deal of contestation takes place in the day-to-day practice of making the news. Bourdieu constructs the field of cultural production in relation to 'positions' of genres and works of art and 'position-takings' by social agents in the field, and characterises them as a 'field of struggles' (1983: 312). He assesses the journalism field via the interaction between agency and structure with power deemed economic and cultural in the field.

Other Marxist and neo-Marxist critiques of journalism including McNair (1998) focus on the economic, political and technological controls on the media and the individual journalists. For all the structural controls identified by McNair and others, in Bourdieu's assessment of the field he, nevertheless, identifies individual agency as a dynamic, specifically professional and intellectual autonomy as being an aspiration for journalists. He describes degrees of autonomy in both the individual and the publication, but adds that individual journalists also have a position in the journalistic field which is attached to their authority or renown. In drawing on social class he claims the level of authority or renown comes from the individual's position in 'the social games' and their ability to take part successfully in competition for scoops, for access to big names or elite people (2005b: 44). Weaver's survey of American journalists found that among the under-forties autonomy of story choice was the number one predictor of job satisfaction (1998: 463). Schudson goes further in claiming that 'in the daily practice of journalism, autonomy is a prize that honest journalists and editors seek' (2005: 218).

Bourdieu also notes that professional and intellectual autonomy is dependent on a range of political economy factors impacting on job insecurity including ownership, position in the organisation (staff or freelance), salary and reputation and links to the market (1996: 69). He identifies the individual journalist's capacity for autonomous production as a variable in autonomy. In identifying the elements of news practice, Deuze notes a 'shared occupational ideology among newswriters' which includes 'to be autonomous, free and independent in their work' as well as 'to provide a public service; to be objective, fair and credible; to have a sense of immediacy and speed, and to have a sense of ethics, validity and legitimacy' (2005: 446-447). For Eagleton, not only is ideology the 'signs and processes of political power', it also revolves around beliefs that 'symbolise the conditions and life experiences of a specific, socially significant group or class' (2007: 28-29). In his assessment of Bourdieu, Eagleton notes that field theory looks at the 'microstructures of ideology and can be characterised as the ideology of everyday life' (2007: 156).

Gaining autonomy involves a complex and on-going process for the journalist, which can be incremental across the career span, forged in the ideology of everyday life. Some journalists attain

high levels of autonomy by dint of their social capital and contacts which enable them to deploy social capital in the acquisition and execution of their work. International journalism also has its elites who thrive on social capital. While Bourdieu and Schudson note the drive for autonomy and renown as a pinnacle of journalism, there is a third element, a trade-off that Bourdieu terms as insecurity. Journalists are in a constant struggle to maintain some level of autonomy, knowing that they must surrender some autonomy to gain security. It is not just financial security, but they also seek security to find access to platforms and, as a result, journalists may choose to adhere to the position of the employer in order to assimilate. As a result, security becomes an acting force upon practice that leads to a calculation on compliance in the field. I will assess this idea in relation to my own practice below.

‘Shake the tree’: Neutral language in commissioning

My time in New York City for TSPL (2003 to 2004) was indicative of having reached a level of renown as an industry practitioner. At that stage I had already practised as a journalist in London and Scotland for 14 years, and had worked my way from a local newspaper to the London tabloids, then returned to Scotland first as a sub editor then deputy news editor of the *Scotsman* newspaper in Edinburgh. When I took up the position as Scotland Correspondent for AP in 2006 there was a culture shock as I was introduced to a new journalistic community, culturally an American community, but fundamentally an international community of journalists. Nominally, it appeared that we would adhere to a similar value set founded on fact-based, objective reporting. But it was refreshing to move from UK to US journalism where I found there was a different value set, a different craft ethos and different ways of articulating primary values (Cotter 2010). This was most notably around commissioning where there was no pressure to ‘over-sell’ a story. I found that my years of experience, including building some renown as a Sunday newspaper journalist, stood for little among American journalists who had a qualified regard for British journalism and who were operating in their own highly developed *habitus*, one where the newswork of AP was reasonably perceived as gold standard. They were insiders with their own ‘coverage calculations’ (Cotter 2010: 71) based on US news values and this meant there was a strong understanding of what was newsworthy, what was not newsworthy and how to play it down the middle. As a newcomer I had to prove my alignment to the givens and values of this community of practice. I had to adapt and become used to new ways of practice, language and insider conventions. To help me in this transition, I was issued with the *AP Stylebook* (2006), a 420-page guide to spelling and house style along with passages on business guides, legal principles, news values around newsgathering and coverage of politics. Cotter (2010) describes the *AP Stylebook* as an example of ‘language ideology’, where house style is the least of it, as the publication is a manual on how to adhere to the ideological principles and positions of US journalism, features sections, for instance, on fair and accurate reporting and neutral reportage.

I became aware early on in my time with AP that American staff in particular were unsure of my ideological position as well as my ability in the craft and practice of journalism. In giving direction for a story, AP executives used expressions such as ‘Tell us what you see’ or ‘Shake the tree’, which were instructions based on the ideology of neutrality identified by Tuchman (1978), and aspiring to the ideal of autonomy and Schudson’s ideal of honesty. By contrast, my experiences in the UK, included executives using expressions such as ‘What is the top line?’, which in the British tradition is an invitation to sell the story as hard as possible. Moving from the UK to the US forms, it seemed I was given more autonomy and commissioning seemed less directive.

‘Live free or die’: Newsroom politics

To understand the transition from one *habitus* to another, it could be useful to start with an example of practice while I was a foreign correspondent working in the US for a British publication. As foreign correspondent for The Scotsman Publications in New York City I covered the Democratic primary elections to find the nominee to run against George W Bush, who had declared for a second term. The emerging story by the autumn of 2003 was the campaign of Howard Dean, though John Kerry eventually won the race at the Democrat Convention in July 2004. Dean had taken an early lead in the polls following a grassroots campaign where he pioneered crowd fundraising campaigns including a US\$25 individual donations drive. Dean had been Governor of Vermont and campaigned hard in New England, which gave me the opportunity to cover American politics outside Washington DC. He was an unknown quantity in the UK and as a result this gave me the opportunity to perform one of the key functions of a foreign correspondent, which is to explain and contextualise the issues for the home audience. It was a short-lived campaign, but the way TSPL handled the coverage of the candidate was far from the ideology of objective and neutral reporting. On one hand I was commissioned to explain the nuances of American politics and how it was possible that an unknown could become the frontrunner for a presidential campaign, but on the other hand I was expected to fall in with the TSPL's relentlessly negative coverage of the candidate.

An op-ed article ('Letter from America', 11 October 2003, the *Scotsman*) on New Hampshire formed part of a package on the Dean campaign trail. During primary elections New Hampshire is seen as a 'make or break state' for presidential hopefuls whether Republican or Democrat, and is the most conservative of the New England states whereas the rest are seen as Democrat heartlands. In terms of *doxa*, the op-ed article demonstrated that journalists can make a conscious decision to write articles even if they do not agree with the dominant ideology of their publication. As an opinion piece it aimed to address the subject by taking a look at the underlying political and cultural issues around the libertarian political movement in New Hampshire, state motto 'Live free or die'. The article described how the state became a lightning rod for libertarians who hoped to reimagine the American Dream through the Free State Project, a movement that sought some independence from the rest of the US.

I was commissioned to explore the politics and attitudes of the state, but was expected to write in the style of a think piece. The libertarian politics described in the piece align clearly to the politics of the then TSPL owners, the publisher and the editor. I did not necessarily agree with the politics of the subject matter, but when I came across the Free State Project I knew it would be of interest to the editor and would fit in with TSPL worldview. I had never aligned to conservative or neo-conservative politics while at the *Scotsman* and. Therefore, had not been accorded full autonomy while deputy news editor in Edinburgh. However, I noticed that I was conferred some degree of autonomy in my role in the US. In terms of *doxa*, it may be that I understood and could play the rules of the game to gain a commission, by making a coverage calculation, though never being ascribed full autonomy and renown by those with 'economic power' or 'capital' in the organisation. As a journalist with good contacts and understanding of the nuances and internality of US politics I was acquiring cultural social capital and an understanding of power in the field through displaying *doxa*, so my autonomy and renown grew, but this aligned with the agenda of the owner and publisher. The newspaper and editor would also accrue cultural power (renown) if my articles aligned to the organisation's agenda.

The publication had taken a clear anti-Dean stance during his campaign, and asked me to take a sceptical line when writing about it. This is clear in the article 'Dean in the lead, but can he keep it?' (3 January 2004, the *Scotsman*), which is a long page lead yet contains only criticisms of Dean. The original copy included quotes from Dean and his campaign as well as the quotes criticising the

candidate, but the former were removed in editing. This demonstrates a number of issues, including bias and partisan reporting against Dean by the newspaper; but it also shows a lack of autonomy and control on my part in relation to my work since British national newspaper reporting is often biased and partisan in the coverage of politics.

‘Dial 9/11 for Rudy’: When ideology collides with reality

The appetite for US stories was summed up by the editor of the *Scotsman* who told me to ‘keep the crazy Americana coming’. However, this in itself was in indication of the type of stories expected from me. My response to this commissioning position was one where the *doxic* experience was an open invitation to embrace and play to the rules of the game. In terms of constraints, Neveu notes that Bourdieu tends to emphasise ‘the ways in which the end-product of the work of journalists within press organisations flows out of the constraints’ (2005: 206). An example is the article ‘Giuliani: Bush’s dream ticket’ (29 February 2004, *Scotland on Sunday*) in which I speculate that due to Vice-President Dick Cheney’s ill health, George W. Bush was seeking former New York mayor Rudolph Giuliani as a running-mate in the 2004 election.

This story was commissioned from Edinburgh and came from an opinion piece in *USA Today* that had gained no traction in the US media. In the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks Giuliani had become a galvanising figure for American conservatives, and as a Republican he seemed a natural potential choice for Bush. But in speaking to political analysts in the US it became clear they were steering me away from the story as they believed Bush would not bring the former mayor on board (which turned out to be the case). However, executives at *Scotland on Sunday* insisted that I write the piece and it appeared as a page lead in a prominent position. The article was then mocked in a major liberal newspaper (‘Dial 9/11 for Rudy’, Harkavy, 1 March 2004, *Village Voice*), which professionally was an embarrassment. The TSPL push for a neo-conservative agenda had overridden the need for caution urged by experts who dismissed the *USA Today* article as inaccurate speculation. In terms of *doxa*, my expertise and analysis were kept out of the commissioning process and the views I had gathered on the story were not taken into account. The case suggests that in the journalistic field, social capital, renown and autonomy are acquired (or lost, or put on hold) in a complicated and varying commissioning process, being conferred and removed, altered and reduced on an on-going basis, the nuances of which are fluid and continually open to change. In this way the struggle in the journalism field is fought on an article-by-article basis.

Bluster and bravado when The Donald comes to town

In 2007, one year into my six-years as Scotland correspondent for AP, Donald Trump announced his plan to build ‘the world’s greatest golf course’ in Scotland and at the time, while he had previously indicated his political ambitions, he was viewed as a celebrity businessman and reality TV star. Over the next five years I was to return to the story on a number of occasions. How the Trump story was discussed by me and AP colleagues in London is important because it reveals a number of issues in journalism practice around stories featuring a major and powerful figure and how UK and US commissioning editors might approach issues differently. Some of the early stories about the golf resort at the Menie Estate in Aberdeenshire were played ‘straight down the line’ and in the commissioning process, discussions with AP were about getting the information about the resort out to the public (‘Trump’s planned Scotland golf course hits opposition over rare birds’, 10 December 2007, *USA Today*). The practice of playing it down the line, or down the middle, is a result of the normative news values of neutrality and objectivity in US journalism (Schudson 2011). By 2008, local opposition to the resort had grown and ‘the line’ or approach to the story became a ‘David and Goliath’ tale where local farmers and fishermen became locked in a legal battle with the Trump

Organization. The tycoon also ran into Scottish local government bureaucracy that led to a number of stories about planning permission, local wind farm plans and the coat of arms for his golf course. As opposition grew, so did Trump's hyperbole about the resort, as did his denigration and personal attacks on local protesters, which is a now familiar tactic by the President. Trump's mercurial relationship with the media had been on-going for some time and he disputed reporting of his wealth, claiming AP and other news media had substantially underestimated his value.

Throughout 2007 and 2008 I made a number of representations to the Trump Organization to request a one-to-one interview with him about the golf resort. A number of Scottish news media had secured interviews, but I had been declined. On the day Trump gave evidence to the public inquiry into the resort he started his evidence in the morning and at lunchtime I got the interview in the toilet. The interview lasted about five minutes during which he gave me the 'I'm slaying them!' quote. To me, this was the best quote of the day and since it was a colourful and exciting scoop, I was pleased to have got the interview and to have elicited such a bellicose and definitive response.

However, AP executives were concerned about the circumstances in which the quotes were sourced, even though I had established the conventions of an on-the-record conversation at the start of the interview. From the British position of practice, I had no qualms about the quotes, they were *bona fide* and I believe a British editor would have been pleased and possibly amused by the newsgathering technique. The American news editor, however, while acknowledging the potency of the quote and the amusing circumstances, asked me to run through precisely the encounter with Trump on three separate occasions over the course of the afternoon. At this stage I had worked for AP for just under two years and I believed that I had demonstrated that I was a reliable and experienced journalist, and was able to make autonomous decisions about newsgathering and news values. The AP editors, in London and New York, said they did want to use the quotes for fear that the conversation had occurred in a private space and that it was private regardless of establishing it as an on the record conversation. The resulting article ('Trump presses for Scottish golf course', 10 June 2008, *New York Times*) did not use any of the quotes from the toilet interview. I was unable to persuade the editors of the legitimacy of the quotes or newsgathering. Instead, the article played the story 'down the line' and only in the penultimate paragraph of the story was any of the colour used. This colour was from Trump's testimony and the public gallery's reaction to some of his more outlandish claims.

Subsequent Trump stories such as the conferment of an honorary doctorate and announcement at that stage of his vague plan to run for President were reactive and largely played down the line. However, by the time Trump arrived in Edinburgh to give evidence to the Scottish parliament's inquiry into proposed offshore wind farms which were visible from his golf resort there was an opportunity to make the case again to be more playful and the commissioning editors encouraged more the use language such as 'He came, he saw, he blustered' (8 May 2012, *USA Today*). As the Trump story changed from a straightforward business story to a wider human interest and hard news story, so the commissioning discussions began to change. I was encouraged to inject some fun into the stories, including lines calling Trump 'The Donald', highlighting 'his shellacked hair' and reporting that 'he blustered' (13 October 2008, *ABC News*). *USA Today* (7 November 2008) even carried: 'The Donald has trumped his opponents.' This shows a more relaxed attitude to Trump by AP as the story progressed. As his claims of the scheme and his role in it became more grandiose, such as renaming the sand dunes the Dunes of Scotland in honour of his mother, the tone of the commissioning process became more colourful. The above process took place over a number of months and years, but demonstrate the difficulties, or struggles, faced by journalists in the field.

Conclusion: The paradox of ideological alignment

In assessing the cross-cultural distinctions in autonomy and renown between the UK and the US, the Bourdieusian struggle for autonomy is constant and is revisited on an almost story-by-story basis. In terms of normative news practices this could be characterised as the natural on-going testing of stories by editors to gain a sense of the importance of the story and where it fits in the news agenda. Those negotiations could be aligned to the principles of newsworthiness as set out by Galtung and Ruge (1965), Harcup and O'Neill (2001) and the elements of journalism as described by Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007). The background to commissioning negotiations in the UK and US is the unseen structure of *habitus* and *doxa* that impacts on practice. There are some major similarities and differences on the testing of autonomy and renown in US journalism as against UK journalism. While the conferment of autonomy is not lightly given in either news culture, I notice that in US journalism there is a desire to assign it when and where it is deserved on a perceived meritocratic basis, although this does not take account of unconscious bias. On the other hand, in UK journalism I noticed that conferment was more openly based on patronage and personal favour that manifests itself by cultural capital through an alignment to the news agendas of editors and owners. However, in each case, the unseen structure impacts on how autonomy is conferred. The apparent freedom of US journalism does not always mean there is a free rein within the work, as initial broad and objective commissioning language can be supplemented with more precise direction. In both cases, I also note the invisible structures, as described by Bourdieu, at work. In the case of the UK and US decision-making and commissioning occurs within the differing unconscious bias of the *habitus* of each news environment.

In the case of Donald Trump's Scottish golf resort, I was unable to assert successfully that the quotes gathered in the toilet at the public inquiry were ethically sourced and suitable for use. There were wider issues around the social capital of Trump and his general relations with the media, but this episode demonstrates a difference between practices in the UK and the US, characterised by a formality in newsgathering and nuanced difference in acceptable sourcing of quotes in public and private spaces, and deference to hierarchy. In terms of commissioning, the senior executives at the time decided not to use the toilet interview because of the unorthodox means by which it happened. However, in assessing the decision-making through the lens of Bourdieu's social capital or Allan's hierarchy of credibility (2007) a different picture may emerge. The power transaction between me, Trump and AP was wide and varied. First, there are those with cultural capital and economic power, like Trump. He and AP had a fractious relationship, as he does with most US media. Therefore, the reaction to him was to treat the story with caution as they had other conflicts with the tycoon in the US – and he had already developed his trait of denial and strong rebuttal to adverse media coverage. Second, as my relationship with AP played out it is clear that in this case I was not afforded autonomy. In applying Bourdieu's assessment of social capital it might be viewed that I had not yet gained a sufficient level of trust and this may be down to social capital or perhaps even nationality. They were, with good reason, cautious about British journalism practice, which does not align to the ideology of playing it down the line.

A paradox in my practice in UK journalism emerged in relation to political coverage, as the more I aligned to the biased and partisan positions of TSPL, the more nominal autonomy I gained and this ambivalent position gave me a form of freedom within the boundaries of the ideological position of the news organisation. Schlesinger notes in his assessment of practice in the BBC (1978: 137) that newswriters can be largely unaware of the impact of ideological alignment on their agency and decision-making and trust with the news agenda in this sense is limited and draws upon trust conferred by senior executives. Newswriters may on the one hand be unaware that they are drawn into this relationship or they may make a calculation of compliance. Bourdieu highlights the economic constraints on journalism within the field of cultural production, noting the impact of the

‘invisible structures’ of market share and competition (1996: 39). Journalism, according to Bourdieu, is ‘more dependent on external forces than the other fields of production’ (1996: 53), and he also notes that relations between advertisers, high status journalists, owners and editors are ‘invisible power relations’ (1996: 40).

My experience of the British system aligns with much of the political economy critiques of journalism, that the individual journalist has limited control over some aspects of his or her work, such as story selection and presentation. The individual is left with the power to argue and make the case for stories, which is a calculation of compliance. However, ultimately the power balance resides with the owners and editors and the influence of external actors.

Mattelart (1994) notes that the outputs of the international news agencies are ‘strongly influenced’ by American mores, rationales, interests and standards. My experiences of working with AP was one where American interests were at the forefront of commissioning and editorial thought. American standards were contextualised and confirmed via the ideological text of the *AP Stylebook* (2006). The mores and rationales of American journalism were institutionalised via the socialisation processes into AP and the accepted view that stories were gathered, written and disseminated via the frame or lens of American interests for an American audience.

An important difference between US and UK journalism is that the commissioning process in the UK is overtly directive while US commissioning uses the language of objectivity. Nevertheless, US processes are also directive and impact on objectivity in ways that may not always be conscious on the part of the commissioning editors. Practitioners are more likely to see the trade-off as relinquishing autonomy to gain security, and any claim for autonomy in international journalism practice is fluid and a story-by-story negotiation. UK news organisations expect journalists to fall into line with the political viewpoint of owners and editors while in the US there is an expectation to fall into line with ideology of newswork via organisational norms and normative news values.

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